



The Council of State Governments

MIDWESTERN OFFICE



Midwestern Radioactive Materials Transportation Project

RADIOACTIVE WASTE TRANSPORTATION

The federal government bears the responsibility of transporting thousands of tons of highly radioactive waste from 72 nuclear power plants and a handful of federal sites to an underground repository for disposal. The majority of the waste will be in the form of spent nuclear fuel, which is currently stored at nuclear power plants in pools of water or in large concrete and metal containers called “dry casks.” With 23 nuclear power plants and one commercial spent-fuel storage facility, by 2011 the Midwestern states will be home to more than 17,000 metric tons of spent fuel awaiting disposal. Another 40,000 metric tons of spent fuel in the East and the South could pass through the Midwest on its way to the repository.

Although spent fuel can remain safely in storage at reactor sites for many decades, scientists agree that, as a strategy for long-term disposal, spent fuel should be isolated from people and from the environment. In the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, the U.S. Congress charged the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) with setting up a program for managing the spent fuel resulting from the commercial generation of electricity, as well as research and defense activities. In addition, Congress made DOE responsible for disposing of the high-level radioactive waste left over from the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

In 2002, following DOE’s recommendation, Congress approved the selection of Yucca Mountain in Nevada as the site for developing the nation’s first permanent repository for these wastes. In June 2008, DOE intends to apply to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for authorization to construct the repository. If the NRC awards DOE a license to operate the facility, shipments to the repository could begin as early as 2017. Shipments could begin even sooner, depending on



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Midwestern Office

701 East 22nd Street, Suite 110

Lombard, IL 60148

the outcome of other proposals to reprocess or recycle spent fuel or to construct a centralized storage facility. Because most options for storage and disposal will require transport of spent fuel, it is imperative for the states to be prepared in the event shipments begin with only a few years' notice.

MIDWESTERN RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS TRANSPORTATION PROJECT

To ensure that the Midwestern states have input into the federal program for transporting spent fuel and high-level radioactive waste, The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Office (CSG Midwest) established the Midwestern Radioactive Materials Transportation Project in 1989. Funded by a cooperative agreement with DOE, the Transportation Project sets up a two-way system of communication to keep state officials informed of DOE's transportation-related developments and to provide DOE with information on regional issues related to its radioactive materials shipments.

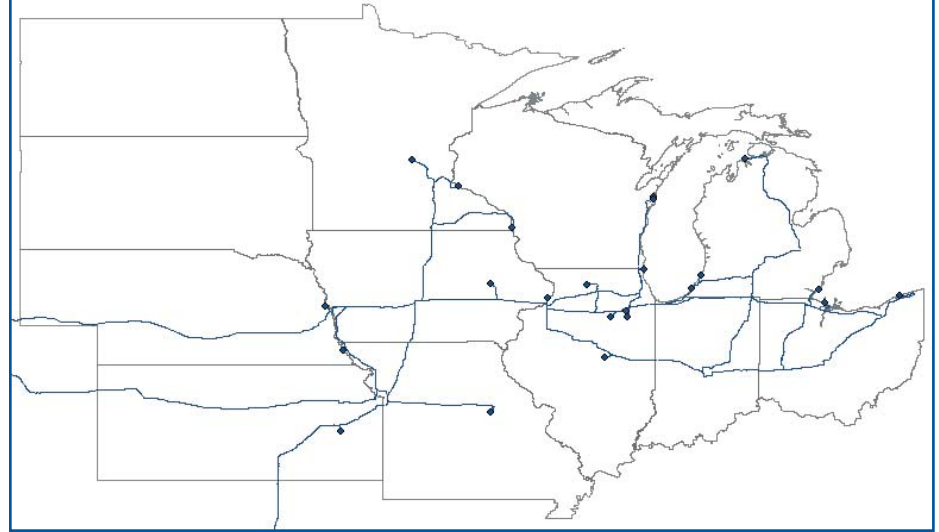
The primary vehicle for identifying and resolving regional issues is the Midwestern Radioactive Materials Transportation Committee, which consists of 12 executive agency officials and up to 12 legislators from the Midwestern states. Through the Midwestern Governors Association, each of the Midwestern governors appoints one representative to the committee. The chair of CSG's Midwestern Legislative Conference appoints the legislative members.

The committee convenes meetings and conference calls to discuss federal, regional, and state issues concerning radioactive waste transportation and to formulate regional positions, when appropriate. In addition to planning ahead for the repository shipments, the committee works closely with DOE on current shipments of radioactive waste, such as shipments of transuranic waste to DOE's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico. This interaction helps the committee make sure DOE's programs that transport radioactive waste meet the affected states' expectations.

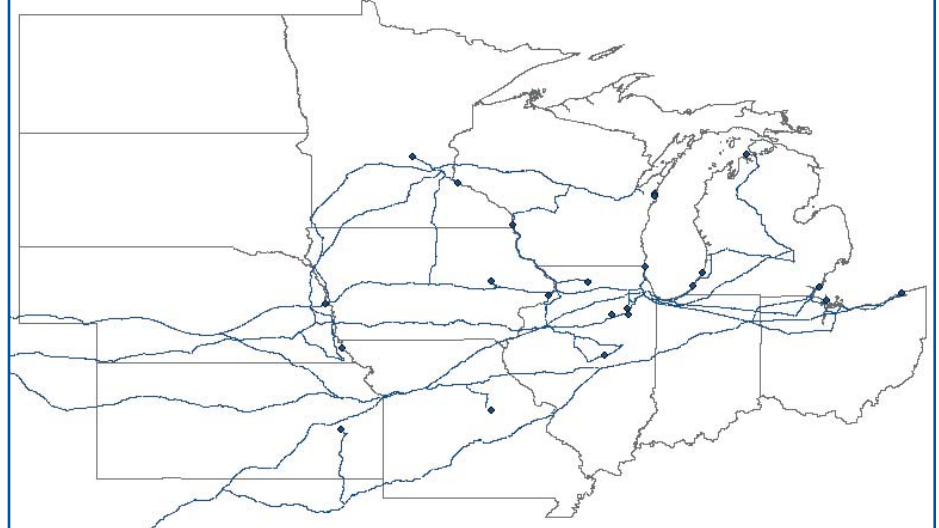
ROUTES FROM POWER PLANTS IN THE MIDWEST

DOE has set a goal of identifying a preliminary suite of shipping routes to Yucca Mountain by the end of 2007, therefore the committee will focus its attention this year on route selection. The Midwest previously provided DOE with substantive input on potential routes in 2005, when the committee completed its two-year analysis of available rail and highway routes through the region. The committee recommended a set of routes for DOE to use as a starting point for discussions of route selection at the national level. These routes met the region's own evaluation criteria, which included radiological risk to the public, road and rail conditions, and accident rates. In 2007, members of the committee are serving on a national working group charged with examining potential routes for shipments. The identification of preliminary routes will assist the states in assessing their needs related to preparing to inspect and escort shipments as well as respond to emergencies. DOE will use the work accomplished on this task when it conducts a pilot test of the department's financial assistance program in 2008.

Potential Highway Routes from Midwestern Nuclear Power Plants



Potential Rail Routes from Midwestern Nuclear Power Plants



For more information on the Midwestern Radioactive Materials Transportation Project or to order project publications, please contact:

The Council of State Governments
Midwestern Office
701 E. 22nd Street, Suite 110
Lombard, IL 60148
phone: 630.925.1922
email: csgm@csg.org
website: www.csgmidwest.org/About/MRMTP.htm